



## Salton Sea Management Program

# 10-Year Plan Committee Meeting Summary

Held Feb. 7, 2018 – Coachella

Prepared by the Consensus Building Institute

### Meeting in Brief

To fully realize the adaptive management program, the Committee would recommend working with regulatory agencies to identify specific targets or objectives for species, consistent with Science Committee insights. California Department of Fish and Wildlife is working on identifying these targets.

The Committee would be very interested in helping the State evaluate project elements to maximize benefit while managing costs, but is sensitive that it doesn't want to slow progress.

The Committee would recommend that the State develop budgets and begin anticipating funding for operation and maintenance and the adaptive management program.

The Outreach Committee and Salton Sea Authority will develop a fact sheet, information on the web, and common message of support for SB5 that other organizations can use.

[Click here](#) for link to meeting presentations.

### Future Agenda Topics

The Committee identified the following topics as potential future discussion items.

- Updates on budgets
- Status updates on habitat criteria, status of cost estimate tool
- Set schedule and explain hold-ups
- Construction schedules and expenditures
- Evaluating project design options and trade-offs given budgets
- Audubon survey results
- Status of easements
- IID maps of dust control projects / efforts
- Overarching permit to cover all types of projects that fit within common parameters
- Army Corps to discuss what is needed with their permits
- Share updates on status of playa exposure, salinity, air quality, other critical parameters – report card similar to Bay-Delta
- Historical timeline for activities to date (how long does each activity take?) Feed this info into the Long Range Committee
- How is SSMP integrated with the Riverside County proposal – which includes an infrastructure finance piece – maybe invite the consultants that are developing their funding proposal (TetraTech)
- Operations and maintenance, how much and how to fund

## **MEETING SUMMARY**

### **Revised Work Plan**

Vivien Maisonneuve from DWR provided a brief overview on the comments received and incorporated into the work plan. The work plan will be a living document, and the State will continue to update it periodically based on lessons learned via pilot projects and other developments. The Natural Resources Agency web site will remain programmatic and the Department of Water Resources (DWR) site will hold data.

### **Adaptive Management**

To fully realize the adaptive management program, the committee would recommend working with the regulatory agencies to identify specific targets or objectives for species, consistent with Science Committee insights. California Department of Fish and Wildlife is going to work on identifying the targets to be able to implement the adaptive management approach.

The current work plan has specific criteria for water salinity and plans to develop further criteria based on the pilots. DWR knows enough about what is needed in various scenarios to move forward with design build and will continue to refine approaches based on lessons learned.

The Science Committee will likely weigh in on identifying specific targets and the regulatory agencies would also need to provide on this. Later in the meeting, Scott Wilson from California Department of Fish & Wildlife (DFW) confirmed that DFW would be working on developing these target numbers.

Another suggestion was to identify the amount of habitat per species and the corresponding yield for biomass.

### **Air and Water Quality Management Plan**

The State is still developing the Air Quality Management Plan. The state is working on water quality project by project. Water quality in projects is driven by salinity. The State hopes to be able to have data on a web site eventually.

### **Expenditures and Planning Tools**

The Committee would be very interested in helping the State evaluate trade-offs and options between project elements to maximize value while managing costs, but is sensitive that it doesn't want to slow progress. Weighing options (length of levees, depth of water, etc.) to maximize the value of projects is of interest to the Committee.

At this point, budgets for operation and maintenance and adaptive management are not developed. The Committee would recommend that the state develop these and begin anticipating funding soon.

The State will publish the cost-planning tool in the near future.

The State presented a number of slides on the budget. The State will be using Proposition 84 and Proposition 1 funds to construct:

- Species conservation habitat (with 3,770 acres of permitted habitat, which includes already funded New River East and West and funding-in-development New River Far-East and Far-West),
- Some air quality projects,
- Habitat associated with geothermal leases,

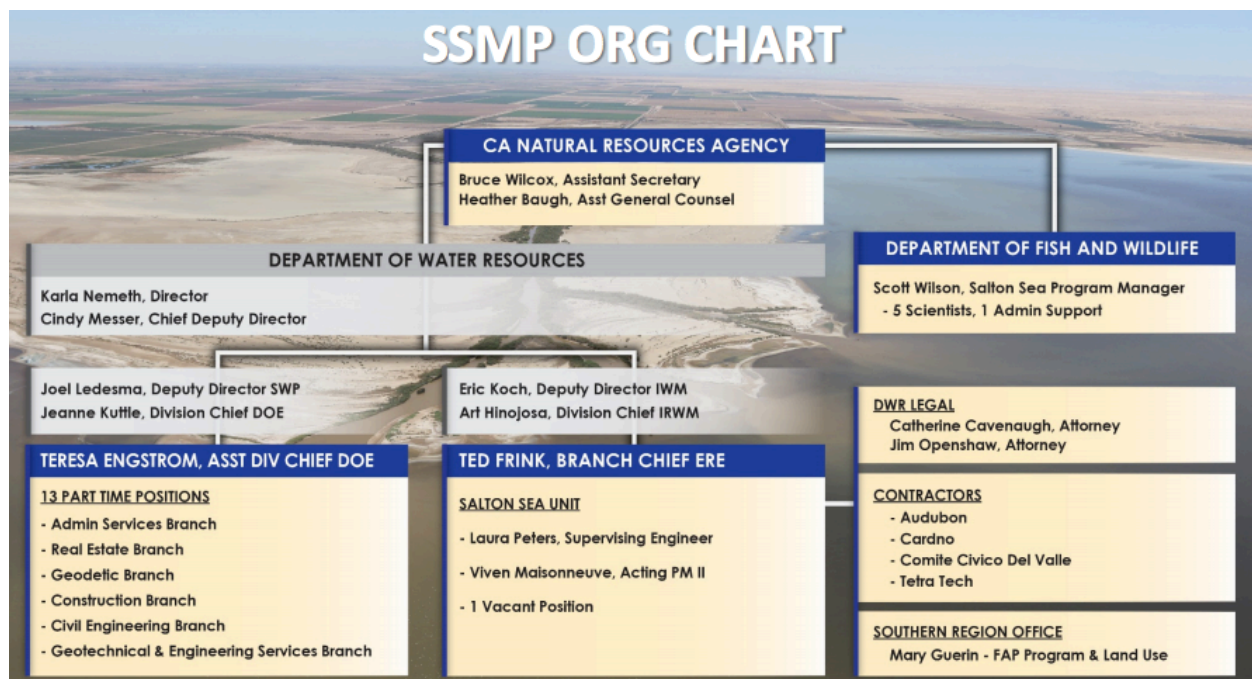
- Planning phase of the Whitewater River Area or North-end, and
- Construction of financial assistance projects.

The State will present New River West to the Science Committee for review.

### Staffing

Vivien Maisonneuve discussed State staffing for the Salton Sea. Competing demands at the Department of Water Resources could affect the Salton Sea, such as emergencies like Oroville or programs needs for the Delta. DWR's Department of Engineering has authority to implement large projects.

In addition to the diagram, the State Water Resources Control Board and Regional Water Quality Control Board have staff working on the Salton Sea.



### Funding

The Outreach Committee and Salton Sea Authority will develop a fact sheet, information on the web, and common message of support for SB5 that other organizations can use. SB5 would provide an additional \$190 million for the Salton Sea. The Committee recommends keeping the message simple – a statement of support for passing SB5.

A new water bond including \$200 million for the Salton Sea will be on the ballot in November 2018.

### Habitat Design Criteria

California Department of Fish & Wildlife's Scott Wilson and a colleague spoke about the [draft habitat design criteria](#).

The habitat design criteria are intended to guide the project-specific habitat objectives to achieve the goals for aquatic habitat identified in the SSMP Work Plan. The habitat design criteria were

developed considering fish and wildlife ecology, water quality and project site limitations, and risks that cannot be fully addressed through design criteria.

The goals are to create fish-eating bird habitat and provide habitat for pupfish. Broad criteria inform the physical design: some is specific, and some is general. The habitat includes a range of salinity, flow, depth, vegetation, etc.

Salinity levels are targeted to achieve certain aspects, such as reducing invasive species, mosquito vectors, and bioaccumulation and promoting specific growth of other species.

The stipulated order requires 50% habitat. The Committee could help evaluate if the goals are being met.

The team is continuing to refine the habitat design criteria and envision the next steps coming out of the meeting:

- Science Committee review and other Committee input
- Develop project-specific habitat objectives consistent with criteria
- Develop programmatic objectives and targets for habitat
- Develop monitoring and adaptive management plan
- Periodic re-assessment of habitat design criteria

### **Discussion and Insights**

The criteria provide specifics for each habitat type and aim for variability in different types of habitats for different species.

The Farm Bureau is working to reduce silt, which is a vehicle for phosphorous, getting to the Sea.

The concept is to start working with deeper ponds first so those ponds can then serve as water supply for subsequent efforts.

The team is adapting the USGS Adaptive Management Framework.

The Regional Water Quality Control Board is watching for aquatic toxicity via pesticides.

Costs do not appear to reflect the habitat design elements (islands, channels, habitat features) so the State would need to true up the estimates with those features.

Existing budgets do not include funding for operations and maintenance and adaptive management. The State is not allowed to use bond funding for operations and maintenance. So funding for these elements will likely require an act of the legislature.

### **Feedback on Meeting**

- Hard to hear
- Need to allow committee members to be at the tables
- Thanks for getting the materials out to group in advance of the meeting so they could review
- Could give out assignments to committee members rather than just inviting them to listen and participate in discussion for a single day quarterly
- Give heads up to listserv when documents are released
- Make a better effort to reach out to Hispanic population in Imperial County

## **Contacts**

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